

Tick Tock...

Tick Tock...



Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp

Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk

Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk

It's That Time
of Year Again



Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo



Washington State Senate

Senator Julia Patterson
33rd Legislative District

(360) 786-7664
Toll-free Hotline: 1-800-562-6000
TTY: 1-800-635-9993
e-mail: patterson_ju@leg.wa.gov

Dear Friends,

It's that time of year again. Summer vacation is over, the hint of fall is in the air. As our children and grandchildren head out the door for another year of school, you probably wonder what's in store for them. This year there will be changes occurring in our public schools that should ease your mind. The hours our children spend at school each day should be more productive — and more safe — than ever before.

This brochure is intended to let you know what improvements you can expect in our schools. Many of these improvements respond to the demands of competition our children will face in the 21st century. Others, unfortunately, have been brought on by the threat of violence.

Few things are more important to the health of a community than its schools. With additional resources to help teachers in their quest to help our children succeed, provide teachers and students with the best tools possible, and to make our schools more safe, we can once again make our education system the best in the nation.

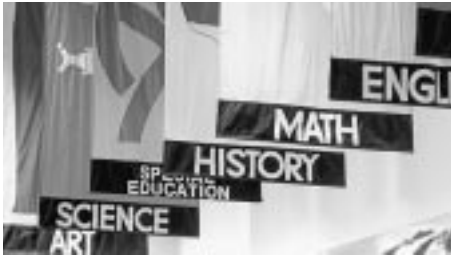
I hope this school year is the best one yet for you and your children!

Sincerely,

Sen. Julia Patterson
33rd Legislative District

Committees: State & Local Government • Human Services & Corrections • Transportation

Our Schools, Our Future: On the Road to Success



Higher standards, greater accountability

As we move into the next century, more will be demanded of our children. That's why we've set a higher standard that they must meet before they receive a diploma. But demanding more is only part of the equation. We must also make sure that schools and teachers are held accountable for their performance. If schools succeed, they should be recognized. If they fall short, they should be given whatever help they need to turn things around.

For instance, the new Excellence in Mathematics Training Program created by the Legislature last year will provide additional math instruction training to teachers, particularly teachers from schools whose students failed to perform up to the new state standards.

The premise of our new accountability system, which is to be overseen by the new Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission, is that **every** school should improve **each** year.

Each year, every school will issue its own "report card." That evaluation will spell out what progress in improved test scores the school made in the previous year, and will outline its plans for improvement in the year ahead. Meanwhile, the state will evaluate and compare each school's progress. With that information, the state will then be able to help weak schools — especially those that are repeatedly unable to meet academic expectations.

In the wake of the efforts we've undertaken in the last several years, I'm confident our schools are now well on the road to meeting our expectations.

Sure, the new standards are tough. They need to be if our children are going to be adequately prepared for life.

Class-size Reductions

Deep in the state's new \$20.6 billion operating budget is an item of great significance to our 4th graders. A total of \$27.3 million is being used to increase instructional personnel in our kindergarten through 4th grade classrooms. The money will pay for 261 more teachers, counselors, and librarians statewide. With this added staff, the 4th grade teacher/student ratio could jump to 53 teachers for every 1,000 students, up from the current 46 teachers per 1,000 students. That's the same student/teacher ratio that currently exists in 1st through 3rd grades.



The benefits of smaller classes are clear. There are fewer students to distract each other, and each student gets more individual attention. Research indicates that smaller classes tend to be "friendlier" environments where students develop better relationships with each other and with their teachers. That kind of environment encourages greater participation. This is especially important in the early grades, where children are still learning how to learn.

School Safety

Statistically, schools are still the safest places for the majority of children in America. Far fewer children are victims of violence at school than at home. But as several tragic and well-publicized events have proven, we can and must do more to make sure our schools are even safer — without

making them into barricaded compounds in the process.

This year, we will have a number of safeguards in place to deal with threats to students, teachers, or staff. Among the new laws the Legislature approved this year is one that allows for the 72-hour detention and mental health evaluation of any child arrested for bringing a gun onto school grounds.

Another allows school officials access to all information about students' criminal and disciplinary history. That way, teachers will be better able to spot troubling behavior before it explodes out of control.

Also, school districts now can apply for a share of \$7 million in school safety grants to pay for additional training for teachers, and leadership training for youngsters. Grants also can be used to pay for additional security guards, metal detectors, and other security measures.

The Year Ahead...

As we demand more of our children and our teachers, we also must demand more of ourselves. If things are ever to significantly improve, parents must play the primary role in their children's education. They must ask questions, help with homework, and take a genuine interest in their children's day. That, however, is something we cannot legislate.

In the meantime, lawmakers will continue to look for other things we can do to improve our public schools. Certainly, that includes a continuous examination of what responsibilities should appropriately fall to the state, to school districts, and to individual schools.

We also will be keenly aware of the work of the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission, whose job it will be to monitor school performance.

And we also need to find ways to make sure our youngest children are ready for school from the start.

Senator Julia Patterson • 33rd Legislative District